

Preliminary Results from Statewide Value of Water Public Survey

The Colorado Water Conservation Board retained Denver-based BBC Research & Consulting to conduct a statewide survey of Colorado residents concerning their knowledge and awareness of water, concerns regarding water-related issues, and perceptions regarding the value of water. BBC will also be conducting follow-up research through a series of regional focus groups across the state.

Project status: Following an extensive process to develop the public survey instrument with review and input from a wide array of stakeholders throughout the state, roughly 2,000 telephone surveys were completed across Colorado. 325 completed surveys were obtained from each of six regions across the state: Central and Southeastern Colorado; Metro Denver; Northeast Colorado; the San Luis Valley; Southwestern Colorado; and West and Northwestern Colorado. BBC has completed a preliminary analysis of the survey results and is currently developing materials and plans for the forthcoming focus groups. These focus groups will explore in greater detail some of the findings in the survey so we have a deeper understanding of the survey responses. They could also be used to test potential messaging concepts to see what ideas have resonance with the public. Stakeholder input will be solicited for the focus group guidance document.

Preliminary findings from the telephone survey: Results from the telephone survey provide considerable insight regarding the awareness and perceptions of Colorado's citizens.

Knowledge and Awareness of Water Issues

- Only about one third of Colorado residents (35%) recognize that agriculture is the largest out-of-stream water use in Colorado. 32% cited household use and 30% cited business and industry¹.
- 72% of respondents indicated they pay more attention to water issues today than they have in the past. The 2002 drought and recent dry years was the most commonly cited reason.
- 73% of respondents pay more attention to their own water use now than they have in the past.

Baseline Cost Perceptions

- Household water service is considered a better bargain than other household services, including energy, cable or satellite TV and telephone/cell phone service. 72% of respondents indicated that water was "inexpensive" or "priced about right," compared to only 28% who indicated that water was "too expensive."
- Most Colorado households would be willing to pay to address water-related concerns. On average, survey households would be willing to pay between \$5 and \$10 per month to address the variety of potential concerns identified in the survey (discussed below).

¹ Three percent indicated they did not know.

Water-related Concerns

Survey respondents were asked to rate their level of concern regarding nine potential Colorado water issues ranging from the quantity of water available to meet various types of needs to the quality of water for home use and the environment. They were also asked to identify which potential concern they considered most important.

- The most frequently selected “Most Important” issue that needs to be addressed was “The quality of the water you receive at your home” (24%).²
- The second most commonly selected “Most Important” issue was “The amount of water available for Colorado’s farms and ranches” (21%).
- “The amount of water available for Colorado’s cities and towns” was the third most frequently selected “Most Important” issue (18%).
- “The condition of underground pipes and water utility infrastructure” was the fourth most frequently selected “Most Important” issue among the nine choices (10%).
- Survey respondents identified concern for “Water quality in our rivers, lakes and streams” (8%), “Amount of water for fish and wildlife” (5%), and “Amount of water for recreational use” (1%).

Education and Outreach Information

- 95% of Coloradans indicated that they think Colorado residents need to know more about the state’s water situation and potential future water issues or concerns.
- The most trusted source for information concerning Colorado’s water issues is the state’s regional water conservation and conservancy districts, such as the Colorado River Water Conservation District and the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District (29%).
- Environmental and conservation organizations (17%) were nearly tied with Colorado’s state government (15%) as the second and third most frequently trusted sources for water information.
- Colorado’s educational institutions were the most trusted source for 9% of survey respondents.
- The Federal government was the least trusted source for Colorado water information among the seven options provided to survey respondents (2%).

Note: The percentages described above are based on a population-weighted compilation of the regional survey results. There are significant variations in the survey responses from the various regions, and in the responses among different demographic segments BBC is continuing to analyze these and other aspects of the survey and will provide much greater detail concerning the survey results in their final report.

² It is unclear if respondents were worried about the current quality of their water or were making a statement that household water quality is their most important value. This is an example of the kind of issue that can be further explored in the focus groups.